

Poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. A new volume of poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the pre-Raphaelite post-painter, has just appeared in London, and has been received with great cordiality by the English critics.

To-day Death seems to me an infant child Whose heretofore mother Life upon my knee Has set to grow my friend and play with me;

If haply so my heart might be beguiled To find no terrors in a face so mild— If haply so my weary heart might be Unto the newborn milky eyes of thee, O Death, before resentment reconciled.

How long, O Death? And shall thy feet depart Still a young child's with mine, or wilt thou stand Full grown the helpful daughter of my heart,

What time with thee indeed I reach the strand Of the pale wave which knows thee what thou art, And drink it in the hollow of thy hand?

And thou, O Life, the lady of all bliss, With whom, when our first heart beat full and fast, I wandered till the haunts of men were passed,

And in fair places found all bowers amies Till only woods and waves might hear our kisses, While to the winds all thought of Death we east—

Ah, Life! and must I have from thee at last No smile to greet me and no babe but this? Lo! Love, the child once ours; and Song, whose hair Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;

And Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair— These o'er the book of Nature mixed their breath With neck-torn arms, as oft we watched them there: And did these die that thou might'st bear me Death?

When vain desire at last and vain regret Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain, What shall assuage the forgotten pain And teach the forgetful to forget? Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet—

Or may the soul at once in a green plain Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain, And curl the dew-drenched flowering anemone? Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air—

— Between the scintillating petals softly blown Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown, Let no such joys as other souls count fair But only the one Hope's one name be there— Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

What shall be said of this embattled day And armed occupation of this night By all thy foes beleaguered—now when sight Nor sound denotes the loved one far away? Of these thy vanquished hours what shalt thou say,

As every sense to which she dealt delight Now labors lonely o'er the stark noon-height To reach the sun's desolate disarray? Stand still, fond fettered wretch! while Memory's art

Parades the Past before thy face, and lures Thy spirit to her passionate portraiture: Till the tempestuous tides flung apart Flood with wild will the hollows of thy heart, And thy heart reads thee, and thy body endures.

The Decay of English Politics. From the Pall Mall Gazette. Certainly the political life of us Englishmen of this generation seems to be separated from that of our fathers, and of those who preceded them by a very distinct line of demarcation, and in a manner not very easily accountable.

For eighty years at least—say from the accession of George III to that of Victoria—after dynastic quarrels had ended, the great subjects of public discussion and controversy were forms of government and political rights. Gradually, and through many a fiercely contested battle, the suffrage was extended, class after class was brought within its range, freedom or license of the press established, the prerogatives of the Crown and of the peerage, if not invaded in legal form, converted by a forcible process of repression from realities into fictions.

And during the whole period the public interest in these questions continued unabated and almost exclusive of others. If Whigs or Jacobins or Radicals thundered, it was at some barrier against the extension of popular power. If Tories rallied, it was in defense of some outwork of the political supremacy of the higher classes. Religious disputes were in abeyance, except that of Catholic emancipation, and this was treated by all but the clergy and a few clerical partisans much more in a political than a sectarian sense.

Economical questions were eagerly debated in certain circles, but excited little interest in the industrious masses, contented, for the most part, to go on protecting and being protected after the philosophy of the middle ages.

Problems concerning the functions and amendment of the Constitution were those which engrossed the faculties of ordinary public men, excited the powers of the greatest orators and statesmen, and roused the passions of the multitude. If a Briton of those days were to have been told that his children or grandchildren would cease almost wholly to take interest in the development and working of that British Constitution which he deemed the nearest approach on earth to the perfection of human wisdom, he would have regarded it as a monstrous and a monstrous thing.

It is impossible to shut our eyes to the phenomena which indicate a cessation, rather sudden than gradual, of that tendency of the popular sentiment towards the extension of more political rights which was thus the ruling public passion for nearly a century. Our champions of advanced political ideas seem rather in the position of miners who have wrought a rich vein of ore during a long series of operations, have followed it in regular progress, and found it grow more and more promising, and are then suddenly brought to a stop by a fault in the strata, rendering it impossible to pursue the valuable seam any farther.

Speaking in a general way, all enthusiasm about more political questions seems to have met with unforeseen paralysis. Never was measure carried through with more laborious and less successful efforts to excite the public mind than the last Reform Bill. It was a

measure of the greatest importance as regards the future adjustment of the balance of power between classes; but it was accepted as a disagreeable necessity by one side, as a boon of very little value by the other; and as soon as the dreary debates which it had occasioned were over, all the world rubbed with a sense of relief to subjects more congenial to the modern national taste.

At this present time there are one or two questions of this class which still remain unsettled—writs and strays, scattered relics of the great contents of old. The "ballot" is one. Thirty years ago to pronounce its name was to raise a topic of fierce and dangerous controversy. Who cares about the ballot now, except a candidate who calculates how far it may lessen his expenses? The representation of minorities is another, and, in our view, a far more important one. Indeed, the problem of dealing with it in a rational way, perhaps, the last secret reserved for the progress of merely political enlightenment. But it seems as if the press and the public were determined to leave it alone. Whether Mr. Harcourt has secured a day for the discussion of his motion on the subject, we really do not know.

We are certain that there is a total absence of engagement on the part of the world in general to know whether it is coming on or not. And it must be remembered that this civic apathy, so to speak, is by no means confined to one class in society. If politics, pure and simple, constitute a mere bore for the present to the ordinary cultivated mind, they seem to be as completely distasteful to the mass of the people. Perhaps there never was in Great Britain—we do not say Ireland—a voluntary organization so powerful as that of our trade unions has become of late years. Any leader who could master and direct it for what we have termed pure political purposes, might effect formidable changes in the State. But scarcely any of their actual leaders have shown the slightest inclination so to apply their power, and the few who have made the attempt have failed altogether. The wiser among unionists do not believe that they should forward their own special views by any dealing with suffrage questions, and the great body do not seem to care about them.

The truth is, not that party sentiment has ceased to exercise its influence on the masses, but that it has taken another direction. Mere political change is no longer, judging by present appearances, an object of general desire. But the interest formerly felt in it has been transferred to two other divisions of public matters, pecuniary and religious. A question to be taken in earnest must touch either the pocket or the Prayer-Book. By pecuniary question we mean, of course, such as affect the possessions or the well-being of the community or of any important class of it. Ever since the great free trade battles which inaugurated the present era in our domestic history, questions of this class have been in the ascendant. Social economy has usurped the domain of politics, and will do so more and more—unless we misinterpret the auguries of the time—until those hazardous problems which lie at the base of it have either been solved or put aside as insoluble. The object now at heart is, not to absorb political power among the several ranks of men, but to apportion the more substantial good things of this life, and few there are nowadays so contented with superficial solutions as to hold the favorite theory of our fathers that the first ensured the second. Any question touching the regulation of the relations between owner and occupier of the soil, or between capital and labor, now excites a palpitating eagerness, very different indeed from those subdued emotions with which we greet the occasional reappearance of the old institutional discussions touching secret voting or the uses of the House of Lords. It may be thought singular that along with this tendency to economical controversies, the age should witness so extraordinary a recrudescence of the spirit of ecclesiastical polemics likewise. But the sagacious observer will recognize this as a scarcely less salient feature of modern society. Men of ability, men of practical sense, men of sound learning, utterly impassive to the declamation or reasoning of political reformers, totally incredulous as to mere political ameliorations—men who in these matters have got, in Mr. Lowe's happy phrase, "between the north wind" into a region of our troubled calm—will take fire on the occurrence of the most insignificant controversy between rival religious parties. There were fifty such men who worked themselves into a fever for or against Dr. Temple for one whose pulse beat a stroke higher by reason of the debate on lodge suffrage. Our party leader of old who thought they knew their countrymen well—the two Pitts, Fox, and Grenvilles—would have recoiled in bewilderment from the notion of one of two united nations rendering its establishments fiercely asunder on a question of Church patronage, and another going half out of its wits about the special regulations under which poor helpless children are to be taught their very elementary "Grammar of Assent" so as to please the sects. Burke, with his larger mind, might have comprehended more nearly the nature of the change which had passed over the mind of his nation; but he would have regarded it as a sign of degeneracy such as was manifested when the Roman nation ceased to study the art of governing empires and betook itself to the Arian controversy. Whether we ought to feel humiliated on this account or not, one thing is certain—men who aspire to lead must first follow, and in order to follow they must sympathize with the genuine movement of their time. For the present the "dry light" of the mere politician is in this country obscured.

Oxygen Gas. The Opinion Nationale of Paris says:—"The new Prefect of the Seine has just definitely authorized the Company of Tessie, du Motay et Cie. to lay down their underground lines in Paris for lighting it with oxygen gas."

A network of pipes will extend from Pantin to the Boulevards, and in a few months all the dwellings between the new Opera House and the Passage Jouffroy will be able to profit by the immense advantages which this means of illumination offers over ordinary gas. Already the oxy-hydrogen burners have been erected at the entrance to the European Bazaar, near the Passage Jouffroy, which give out a light so purely white and of such extraordinary brilliancy that the old gas looks singularly pale and yellow by the side of them.

"We cannot but congratulate the Prefect of the Seine upon having ratified a measure so adapted to the general interest, and which seems to us the indispensable corollary to the great public enterprises undertaken during the last few years in Paris."

It is said that the reason American girls fade so early and have such poor complexions naturally, is because they eat late dinners and suppers. An old Spanish proverb says in reference to this fact:—"A little breakfast is enough; a late dinner is but little; a little supper is too much."

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